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Letter dated 25 February 2000 from the Permanent Representative of Kyrgyzstan to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to transmit the text of the National Programme for the Preparation and Conduct of the International Year of Mountains in Kyrgyzstan, adopted by a decree of the President of Kyrgyzstan in accordance with General Assembly resolution 53/24 of 10 November 1998, entitled "International Year of Mountains, 2002" (see annex).

I should be grateful if you would have this letter and its annex circulated as a document of the General Assembly under agenda items 99 and 100.

(*Signed*) Elmira **Ibraimova**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

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Annex

Decree of the President of Kyrgyzstan on the National Programme for the Preparation and Conduct of the International Year of Mountains in Kyrgyzstan

With a view to laying the foundations for the sustainable development of Kyrgyzstan's mountain regions, and preparing for and conducting the International Year of Mountains in Kyrgyzstan, I hereby decide:

1. To approve the attached National Programme for the Preparation and Conduct of the International Year of Mountains in Kyrgyzstan (hereinafter referred to as "the National Programme") and the plan of activities for the implementation of the National Programme for the Preparation and Conduct of the International Year of Mountains in Kyrgyzstan (hereinafter referred to as "the plan of activities").

2. That the Government of Kyrgyzstan, together with the National Organizing Committee for the Preparation and Conduct of the International Year of Mountains in Kyrgyzstan (hereinafter referred to as "the National Organizing Committee"), shall prepare, by 31 March 2000, a set of measures to implement the provisions of the National Programme and the plan of activities.

3. That ministries, administrative departments, heads of regional, district and municipal State administrations and the head of the local government of Bishkek shall:

- Ensure the implementation of the measures to carry out the National Programme and the plan of activities;
- Submit to the Government of Kyrgyzstan and the National Organizing Committee biannual reports on the implementation of the National Programme and the plan of activities.

4. That the National Organizing Committee shall actively encourage international institutions, public and private organizations and citizens of Kyrgyzstan to participate in the implementation of the National Programme and plan of activities.

5. That the organization and policy division of the State administration of the Office of the President of Kyrgyzstan and the National Organizing Committee shall be responsible for monitoring the implementation of this Decree.

6. That this Decree shall enter into force on the date of its publication.

A. Akaev
President of the Kyrgyz Republic

Bishkek, Government House
22 January 2000

National Programme for the Preparation and Conduct of the International Year of Mountains in Kyrgyzstan

Motto: "To live in a mountainous country is to live in a land of plenty"

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Introduction

In its resolution 53/24 of 10 November 1998, the General Assembly of the United Nations proclaimed the year 2002 as the International Year of Mountains.

The purpose of proclaiming the International Year of Mountains is to draw the attention of States and international organizations to the problems of preserving fragile mountain ecosystems and developing mountainous countries and regions at the turn of the millennium.

Mountains have rich and varied natural resources and are an integral part of the global system that supports life on earth. However, the growing need for resources is posing greater and greater threats to the natural balance of mountain ecosystems. This leads to various kinds of catastrophes, such as earthquakes, landslides, mud flows, erosion and soil degradation.

On the other hand, mountainous countries and regions are populated by numerous ethnic groups and peoples whose traditional socio-economic lifestyle enables them to adapt to and organize their vital activities in harsh living conditions. These ethnic groups and peoples have a rich, original culture that is an integral part of world culture. However, the traditional use of mountain regions for the most part only as sources of raw materials for civilizations living in the plains, and remoteness from cultural, political and economic centres, are destroying the traditional lifestyle and originality of the ethnic groups and peoples of mountain regions and leading to their impoverishment. According to data from international organizations (the United Nations, the United Nations Development Programme and the United Nations Population Fund), the overwhelming majority of mountainous countries are poor and very poor countries.

This Programme has been prepared in accordance with General Assembly resolution 53/24.

In preparing this Programme, its authors took account of the Comprehensive Principles for the Development of Kyrgyzstan and the Programme and Activities of State Support for Alpine and Remote Areas of Kyrgyzstan for 1999-2000, which was adopted by the Government of Kyrgyzstan in its Decision No. 606 of 3 November 1999.

Main body

1. General description of Kyrgyzstan's mountain regions

Kyrgyzstan is the largest mountainous country in Central Asia and is situated in the Pamir Alay range in the south-west and the Tien Shan range in the north-east (area: 198,500 square kilometres).

The natural environment of Kyrgyzstan's mountains is rich and varied: chains of snow-capped peaks, sky-blue lakes and swift mountain rivers and picturesque fertile valleys.

Kyrgyzstan's mountains are rich in minerals and include many elements on the periodic table. A number of mineral deposits are being successfully exploited (gold, coal, gas, non-ferrous metals, marble, granite, building materials and others).

There are large reserves of hydropower and fresh groundwater.

Kyrgyzstan has good pastures for stock-raising (sheep farming, horse- and yak-breeding, dairy farming and so on). It has traditionally been successful in vegetable-growing, horticulture and seed-growing and in the cultivation of cereal and industrial crops (tobacco, cotton, sugar beets and others) and bee-keeping.

The mountainous areas are rich in forests and their gifts: berries, fruit, medicinal plants and others.

Kyrgyzstan has excellent natural, climatic and geographic conditions for the development of tourism and recreation (restorative health treatment, leisure, entertainment).

Kyrgyzstan's mountain and piedmont regions have a workforce large enough to be employed in all branches of the economy. These regions account for over 60 per cent of the country's population, and almost half of the population of mountain and piedmont regions is of working age.

There is a system of education, health care and social protection for the population.

In large and medium-sized communities in mountain regions, there are transport and communications (telephone, telegraph) infrastructures.

Villages have power supplies and drinking water.

Kyrgyzstan is divided into seven administrative regions. Each region has mountains and valleys.

Batken region is situated in south-western Kyrgyzstan and includes three mountainous districts (Batken, Kadamjay and Leylek) and the town of Kyzyl-Kiya, which is also situated in mountainous terrain. Elevations in the region range from 401 to 5,621 metres above sea level.

The climate is continental; winters are cold, summers are warm.

Batken' region's mountainous areas are rich in flora and fauna. There are over two dozen species of hardy shrubs, a large quantity of medicinal herbs and raw materials for industrial use. There are many wild animals and birds. This provides a good basis for creating nature preserves and developing tourism.

The mountain streams possess hydropower resources for the development of small- and large-scale power production.

The region is rich in minerals, including antimony, mercury, gold, tin, silver and coal, which are of great importance to Kyrgyzstan's economic development.

The principal sources of the population's livelihood are stock-raising, farming and horticulture. There is good pasturage.

Jalal-Abad region is situated in western Kyrgyzstan and is divided into eight districts: Bazar-Kurgan, Toguz-Torouz, Ala-Buka, Nooken, Chatkal, Aksu, Suzak and Toktogul. Such districts as Toguz-Torouz, Toktogul and several others are completely situated in the mountains at altitudes ranging from 800 to 3,500 metres above sea level.

The climate in the mountainous districts is continental and mostly dry; winters are long and cold, summers are relatively short and hot.

The basic sector of the economy of the region's mountainous areas is agriculture: stock-raising, farming and bee-keeping.

The mountainous areas have vast hydropower, forest, pasture and water resources.

The forests are rich in nut trees, wild fruits and berries and medicinal plants.

There are excellent conditions for developing tourism and recreation.

Mineral resources include gold, rock salt, coal, lime, wollastonite, antimony, copper, marble and building materials.

Issyk-Kul region, situated in north-eastern Kyrgyzstan, is an extremely mountainous region. It consists of five districts: Ak-Su, Jeti-Oguz, Issyk-Kul, Ton and Tyup. The region is renowned for its natural beauty and high mountains, which form a ring around lake Issyk-Kul. Some of the region's peaks are among the world's highest: Pobeda (Victory) peak (7,439 metres) and Khan-Tengri (6,995). The region's 760 glaciers have a combined area of 1,573 square kilometres.

The climate is continental: spring is cool, summer is not very hot, autumn is warm and winter is mild.

Issyk-Kul region has particularly favourable conditions for stock-raising, farming, forestry, horticulture, tourism and recreation.

The region is rich in minerals: there are relatively large deposits of gold, tin and wolfram ores and also deposits of coal, graphite and diverse raw materials for the construction industry.

There are sizeable hydropower resources for the development of small-scale power production.

Relatively large reserves of fresh groundwater (5,803 cubic metres/day) have been predicted, including confirmed reserves of 2,083 cubic metres/day.

Naryn region is situated in south-eastern Kyrgyzstan at an altitude of 1,500 metres above sea level; mountain ranges cover over 70 per cent of the region. The mountain ranges alternate with deep inter- and intramontane depressions. The largest medium-high mountain valleys are Kochkorka and Jumgal (1,500 to 2,600 metres above sea level), which are situated in districts of the same name. The largest alpine valleys are Ak-say, Arpa, At-Bashi and Son-Kul (2,600 to 3,800 metres above sea level) in which Ak-Tala, At-Bashi and Naryn districts are situated. There are five districts in Naryn region.

The climate is continental: winters are cold and long, with temperatures falling as low as -45 degrees; summers are short and cool.

The region has vast forests, enormous hydropower resources and a large number of water reservoirs (lake Son-Kul, Chatyr-Kul and others), which are excellent resources for developing the fishing industry.

Naryn region has the necessary natural environment for the development of many kinds of tourism.

The region is rich in minerals: relatively large reserves of coal, marble, non-ferrous metals, rock salt, aluminium and iron, and diverse raw materials for the construction industry. There are large reserves of fresh groundwater.

The population's traditional livelihoods are stock-raising (sheep farming, yak- and horse-breeding and others) and the cultivation of cereals and vegetables.

Osh region is situated in south-western Kyrgyzstan and comprises seven districts: Alay, Aravan, Kara-Kulja, Kara-Su, Naukat, Uzgen, Chon-Alay and the town of Osh. The most mountainous regions are Chon-Alay, Alay, Naukat and Kara-Kulja, where settlements are situated at altitudes ranging from 1,500 to 3,500 metres above sea level.

The climate in the mountainous districts is continental and not very cold; there are many sunny days in the year, which is conducive to the existence of rich and varied flora and fauna.

The region has farmland, pasturage and hayfields. The principal forms of stock-raising are sheep farming and yak-breeding; vegetable-growing, horticulture and forestry are well developed.

Osh region has a good base for developing tourism and mountaineering.

Talas region is situated in north-western Kyrgyzstan and consists of four districts (Bakay-Ata, Kara-Buura, Manas and Talas) and the town of Talas. Most of the region is situated on the northern slopes of the Talas Alatau range. The high-mountain area has a very rugged topography with many peaks and steep slopes.

The climate is temperate-continental and is conducive to the development of agriculture.

The population engages in stock-raising (sheep farming, horse- and cattle-breeding and others) and farming (vegetables, fruits, cereals).

Talas region has all the conditions for developing tourism, creating nature preserves and exploiting its medicinal herbs and raw materials.

The region has minerals, such as gold, silver and phosphorus. There are large reserves of hydropower resources.

Chu region is situated in northern Kyrgyzstan at altitudes ranging from 550 to 4,895 metres above sea level. The mountainous districts are situated on the slopes of the Kyrgyz, Zailiysky and Küngey Alatau. The region is divided into eight districts: Alamudun, Jaiyl, Kemin, Moskovsky, Panfilov, Sokuluk, Chu and Issyk-Ata.

The climate is continental and dry, and there are distinct seasons of the year: summer is hot and dry, spring and autumn are mild and wet and winter is cold.

The climatic conditions are very favourable for the development of farming (vegetables, fruits, cereals, fodder, seeds and others) and bee-keeping. The population of the piedmont and mountainous areas has traditionally engaged in stock-raising; priority areas are dairy farming, sheep farming and horse-breeding. The region has good pasturage and forests.

The region's mountainous and piedmont areas are rich in minerals. There are deposits of iron, titanium, chrome, nickel, tin and zinc ores, as well as gold, marble, granite, quartzite and diverse raw materials for the construction industry.

Fresh groundwater reserves have been found and are being exploited.

The region has excellent resources for the development of tourism, mountaineering and recreation.

2. Development problems of Kyrgyzstan's mountain regions

1. Like mountains anywhere else in the world, Kyrgyzstan's mountains are complex and at the same time very fragile. They are relatively young and are still in the process of formation; they are therefore more susceptible to natural geotectonic changes.

Along with these processes, the socio-economic activities of inhabitants of mountain regions are increasing.

Kyrgyzstan's mountainous areas are the most important sources of water, energy and mineral resources, biodiversity and forest products; they are areas for developing agriculture and also places for recreation, pilgrimage and tourism. They are one of the principal sources of our life.

Consequently, our mountains are our greatest national asset.

Traditionally, for years Kyrgyzstan's mountainous areas supplied and continue to supply its valleys with various resources; at the same time, there have not been any special programmes for the replenishment of such resources nor has there been much concern about the environment. All this has led to environmental pollution, misuse of mountain resources and the disruption of the balance of nature, which has adversely affected biodiversity. Such phenomena as earthquakes, soil erosion, landslides, mud flows and falling rocks are, regrettably, now quite common. They permanently alter localities and conditions for people's vital activities, cause great losses to the country's economy and endanger the lives of the inhabitants of mountain regions.

***Urgent measures that must be taken to protect the environment of mountainous areas include**: the development and implementation of programmes for the conservation of mountain resources, the utilization of industrial wastes and the replenishment of renewable mountain resources in order to maintain balance in mountain ecosystems.*

***The second group of measures for developing mountain resources involves the modernization of the economy of mountain regions**.*

It is paradoxical that mountain regions, which possess rich and varied resources, have for the most part remained underdeveloped economically.

One problem related to the development of mountain regions is, *while continuing to employ tried and true traditional methods of economic management, to find and make maximum use of new scientific technologies and methods of developing stock-raising, mountain and piedmont farming, forestry, bee-keeping and so on with a view to increasing productivity and profitability.*

Another problem involves the need for the all-round ***development of the processing industry as close as possible to sources of agricultural raw materials*** (stock-raising, plant-growing, horticulture and others) *in mountain communities and the creation of a modern marketing system.*

It should be stressed that the solution of this problem is one of the main objectives of the economic development of mountain regions.

The improvement of the economy of mountain regions also depends on *the development of a system for supplying energy to mountain and piedmont communities through the development of small-scale, non-traditional sources of energy* (solar, wind, biological and so on). The experience of developed countries has shown that small-scale and non-traditional sources of energy are clean and more economical.

The successful economic development of Kyrgyzstan's mountain regions depends on the *creation of a reliable transport and communications system.* This problem is still rather acute.

3. The third group of measures involves the development of the population of mountain regions.

At present, owing to the increasing marginalization (isolation) of the population of mountain regions, the problems of employment and migration are of great concern. The principal means for solving those problems is through the improvement of the economy of mountain regions, the development of an agricultural and industrial production infrastructure and the creation of a sufficient number of jobs.

Since mountain regions have remained underdeveloped, scant resources are spent on improving the social life of mountain and piedmont communities. In this regard, *there is an urgent need for a radical improvement of the health of the inhabitants of foothills and mountains and the development of a public health-care system.* According to information from the Ministry of Health and the National Statistical Committee of Kyrgyzstan, the mortality rate of children and, in general, of inhabitants of mountain regions is, unfortunately, higher today than that of people living in lowland areas; life expectancy is lower, and there is a high incidence of infectious diseases, blood diseases and, in general, iron deficiency (90 per cent).

In order to raise the population's level of education and provide all areas of livelihood in

mountain regions with specialists, *the system and methods of secondary, specialized and higher education for inhabitants of mountain regions must be improved and new forms and technologies of teaching in mountain communities must be developed and put into practice.*

4. ***The fourth group of measures is related to the administration of mountain regions.***

Many mountain *ails* (rural administrative units) are remote from the country's political, economic, information and cultural centres. As a rule, they are not only remote but dispersed; that is, owing to the peculiar features of the mountainous terrain, they are situated at considerable distances from each other. Very many *ails* are often hard to reach not only because of the terrain but also because of adverse climatic and weather conditions in different seasons of the year. In addition, as is well known, there are considerable difficulties in transport and communications (land and air) between mountain districts, regional centres and the capital.

All these factors complicate the political administration of mountain regions. They make the exchange, receipt and dissemination of information difficult for inhabitants of mountain settlements. This problem is particularly acute during the organization and conduct of electoral campaigns, referendums and so forth.

There is an urgent need to grant mountain districts greater autonomy in the administration and organization of their vital activities in accordance with the principle of maximum autonomy and self-sufficiency.

It is also necessary to introduce modern means of communication that can be widely used for the dissemination, collection and exchange of information, for example, through the development of ramified telecommunications network.

3. Priority areas for the development of Kyrgyzstan's mountain regions

This Programme sets out the basic priority areas for developing Kyrgyzstan's mountain regions, the implementation of which will make it possible to obtain tangible results in the most efficient manner and in the shortest period of time.

The priority areas have been defined with due regard for the existing state of affairs in the areas concerned, the recommendations and views of regional and district administrations, ministries, administrative departments, organizations, research institutes, individual scholars and scientists, private companies and organizations and anyone interested in the development of Kyrgyzstan's mountain regions. Such views were expressed at specially organized conferences and consultations and were also submitted officially in writing.

Priorities for the economic development of mountain regions

At present and in the long term, the key to the development of Kyrgyzstan's mountain regions is the all-round development of their economy.

The main priorities for the economic development of Kyrgyzstan's mountain regions are:

1. Development of sheep farming for meat

The natural, geographic and climatic conditions in the mountains of Kyrgyzstan — the high caloric content of the forage of alpine meadows, the distinct gradation of ecological "niches" for each species of animal, and the pasturage — create favourable conditions for the preferential development of stock-raising in mountainous regions for meat.

Over the centuries, these factors have led the Kyrgyz to raise sheep primarily for meat; this is the main type of stock-raising in mountainous conditions. The development of this branch has enabled mountain dwellers to survive even in the most difficult periods of Kyrgyzstan's history.

Other objective conditions, such as the harsh continental climate prevailing in most mountain regions and the frequency of considerable daily and seasonal fluctuations in air temperature, affect the physiology of animals and is not conducive to the development of sheep-raising for the fine quality of their wool. Repeated attempts in recent years to develop sheep-raising for fine wool have been unsuccessful precisely for these objective reasons.

Thus, at the current stage sheep farming for meat is and will remain the principal type of animal husbandry in Kyrgyzstan.

In order to achieve the desired results in the development of sheep farming for meat, the following objectives must be achieved as soon as possible:

1. Make maximum use of the tried and true centuries-old traditions of the local population in the field of animal husbandry in mountainous terrain;
2. Promote scientific research in the fields of animal husbandry and plant cultivation in mountainous conditions, selection, and the rehabilitation and conservation of pasturage;
3. Prepare and implement a special programme to rehabilitate and conserve pasturage in every region;
4. Rehabilitate or create and develop pedigree stock-raising in every region;
5. Increase credits for farming cooperatives and individual farms engaging in sheep farming for meat;
6. Create a modern marketing system for this branch in all regions and in the country as a whole.

2. Development of yak-breeding

Harsh living conditions at high altitudes have, over many centuries of evolution, made yaks hardy and highly adaptable. Since yaks are exclusively grazers, they are able to convert the dispersed energy of plants and are therefore very cheap to maintain. There are over 1 million hectares of pasturage in Kyrgyzstan that are not easily accessible but which provide good forage for yaks.

Yaks have a number of morphological and physiological features that enable them to live at elevations from 3,000 to 5,200 metres above sea level. Living in treeless, high-mountain semi-deserts, yaks migrate in August and September to the snowline; they spend the winter in high-mountain valleys, making do with the scant grassy vegetation that they find under the snow. Thanks to this ability, *yaks are not the rivals of other forms of productive animals.*

Owing to their cleanness (yaks live at high elevations in environmentally clean conditions), their high caloric content (the fat content of yak milk is as high as 7 per cent; meat — 2,600 kilocalories; fat — 7,160 kilocalories) and their uniqueness (the down of young yaks is similar to eiderdown; yak wool is an excellent material for making wigs; yak blood is a unique starting material for the preparation of sera; yak leather is exceptionally durable and lasting), *the products derived from yak-breeding should become profitable export items.*

Thus, the development of yak-breeding as a high-mountain and environmentally clean branch of the economy, makes it possible to supply raw material to the meat and dairy, wool and tanning industries, and the unique products obtained from these animals can also be used in the pharmaceutical and perfume industries.

In order to develop yak-breeding in Kyrgyzstan, the following objectives must be achieved as soon as possible:

1. Encourage research in the field of yak-breeding, unify Kyrgyzstan's achievements in this field, study the experience of other yak-breeding countries (Nepal, Mongolia, Tajikistan and others) and make this information and experience available to Kyrgyzstan's yak-breeders;
2. Develop selection work and establish yak-breeding farms in the regions;
3. Gradually expand the areas in which yaks are bred and raised in order to make use of all suitable mountain regions;
4. Create a system for processing yak products as a major component of Kyrgyzstan's processing industry;
5. Create a marking system and make yak products an important source of Kyrgyzstan's export income;
6. Provide credit to farm cooperatives and individual farms engaged in yak-breeding and the processing of yak products.

3. Development of a modern system for processing agricultural output and raw materials and creation of a system of marketing services in Kyrgyzstan's mountain regions

The economic development of Kyrgyzstan at the current stage will be effective, first of all, if *processing enterprises are brought as close as possible to the sources of agricultural output* and, secondly, if *small and medium-sized enterprises are created* and the formerly widespread system of large processing enterprises is abandoned. Such an approach will make possible the gradual industrialization of all mountain regions and will generate a large number of jobs. This, in turn, will have a very positive effect on the migration process and will help stabilize migration in Kyrgyzstan (people who migrated to towns will begin to return to mountain regions) and subsequently contribute to the stable development of demographic processes. All this, in the final analysis, will substantially improve the social situation in mountain regions.

In order to create a modern system for processing agricultural output in mountain regions and create a system of marketing services in mountain regions in a short period of time, the following objectives must be achieved:

1. Make use of diverse technology used in processing agricultural output;
2. Unify the achievements of design engineers in the area of machines and equipment for the processing industry;
3. Encourage Kyrgyzstan's industrial enterprises to produce cheap equipment and machines for processing agricultural output: meat, wool, leather, vegetables, fruit, berries, medicinal plants, forest products and so on; draw up a programme for the creation of mini- and medium-sized processing plants and the production of hi-tech equipment;
4. Step up measures to retrain and train specialists for the new mini- and medium-sized processing plants;
5. Create a marketing network for the sale of the output of the processing industry in mountain regions;
6. Extend credit to new and existing mini- and medium-sized plants that process agriculture output and raw materials.

4. Development of small-scale power production

Kyrgyzstan has diverse and substantial sources of energy. Up to now, it has given priority to the development of large hydroelectric power stations; this emphasis was determined by the fact that Kyrgyzstan formed part of the common economic system of the former Soviet Union.

The new conditions for developing Kyrgyzstan call for new, more economical and environmentally clean methods of supplying power to mountain regions. First of all, it is well known that the use of high-tension lines to transmit electric power results in considerable loss of energy (up to 40 per cent); secondly, because of their strong electric field, high-tension lines are very harmful to the environment. Moreover, the construction and maintenance of large hydroelectric power stations is quite expensive.

It is therefore preferable that Kyrgyzstan develop small-scale means of power production in its mountain regions. This requires the use of various sources of energy, both traditional (mountain rivers and streams) and non-traditional (sun, wind, domestic and farm waste, among others).

The efficiency of small-scale power production is determined by a number of important factors:

- relatively small capital input in equipment, materials, building and assembly and start-up;
- short construction time;
- no need to construct high-tension lines or powerful transformer substations;
- independence from the common power-supply system;
- creation of low-cost local power-supply systems;
- insignificant impact on the environment;
- generation of a large number of jobs;

– possibility of carrying out projects with State and private credits.

Thus, the development of a system of small-scale power production has not only economic advantages but will also improve the state of the environment and will considerably help to improve the everyday life and social and cultural living conditions of the population of mountain regions.

Since the availability of power supply is a major criterion for the economic and social development of a region, this problem must be given priority attention.

5. Development of forestry and preserves

The development of forestry as a priority for improving the economic situation in Kyrgyzstan's mountain regions has a number of unquestionable advantages.

First, by developing forestry, Kyrgyzstan can considerably reduce its import of timber from abroad, having set up its own timber industry.

Secondly, forests contain such special resources as berries, wild fruits and medicinal plants, the harvesting and processing of which can not only help meet the needs of Kyrgyzstan's food and pharmaceutical industries but also become a source of export income.

Thirdly, the expansion and development of Kyrgyzstan's forests will considerably improve the environment in its mountain regions. As is well known, the aim of the programmes of the State Forestry Agency of the Government of Kyrgyzstan is the gradual widespread planting of forests, particularly in dry-farming and non-agricultural land, eroded areas, terrain susceptible to landslides and in other unsuitable land in mountain regions. Forests will gradually breathe life into these areas and restore their biodiversity.

Fourthly, Kyrgyzstan's forested areas are excellent resources for the further development of nature-protection areas, such as national parks, nature preserves and so on. Such areas will make it possible to maintain biodiversity, which is an immediate and long-term global priority. It is well known that preserves and national parks in other countries are a national treasure, a source of national pride, a means of attracting foreign investments and, consequently, a source of economic prosperity, particularly of the regions in which they are situated.

For the further development of forestry and preserves, the following tasks must be accomplished:

1. In order to develop forestry and to help meet Kyrgyzstan's need for industrial timber and forest products, *communal forest management* must be introduced; that is, the population must be involved in the protection and planting of forests, reforestation and the use of forests on mutually advantageous terms, and the implementation of large-scale State reforestation programmes and measures to protect forests in mountain regions must be stepped up;

2. Develop a long-term programme of organizing and developing a network of preserves, biosphere territories (reservations) and so on in Kyrgyzstan's mountain regions;

3. Create a system of mini- and small enterprises to process forest berries, fruits and medicinal plants and create a marketing system.

6. Development of alpine tourism and recreation

It is commonly known that mountains are a phenomenon of nature that arouses man's natural curiosity and special interest; mountains have a magical attraction because of their natural beauty, the diversity of their flora and fauna and their distinct weather and climate. Therefore, mountain areas everywhere are places for tourism and recreation (rest, entertainment).

The mountains of Kyrgyzstan are a national treasure which, if treated with care and common sense, can yield maximum dividends from minimum investments. In other words, if properly organized, mountain adventure tourism and recreation should become a profitable sector of Kyrgyzstan's economy.

In order to develop mountain adventure tourism and recreation, the following tasks must be accomplished:

1. Create a system of mountain tourism and recreation;
2. Create an interconnected network of camping areas along tourist trails in the mountains of various regions and in Kyrgyzstan as a whole;
3. Train specialists for tourist groups (guides, rescuers and so on);
4. Develop information and advertising campaigns to attract tourists to mountain regions for recreation.

Priorities for the social development of mountain regions

The social development of mountain regions is wholly dependent on the extent of their economic development. At the same time, the intensiveness and quality of social development have a direct impact on the rate and quality of the economic development of such regions.

In the light of this interrelationship and interdependence, the priorities for the social development of mountain regions are as follows:

1. Modernization of existing and establishment of new modern mountain villages based on the principle of maximum integration of traditional and new technologies in the areas of construction and life-support systems for their inhabitants

In order to achieve this priority, the following tasks must be accomplished:

1. *Develop a model modern mountain village* (*too aiyly*) with modifications for different regions, taking account of the economic development priorities of each region;
2. Restore the practice of preparing guidelines for the territorial development of mountain regions and general plans for their formation and development through the solution of a whole range of problems involved in the creation of the necessary infrastructure;
3. Develop and approve at the governmental level a forward-looking plan for the modernization of existing and the establishment of new mountain villages, and determine which existing mountain villages should be modernized first. Make maximum use of local materials and financial resources to implement the Kyrgyz Government's plan to modernize existing and construct modern mountain villages;
4. Involve foreign investors in the implementation of the Kyrgyz Government's plan to modernize existing and construct modern mountain villages;
5. Establish a system of granting credits for the new economic and social facilities in modernized and new mountain villages.

2. Development of research on mountain-related themes with a view to the practical application of the results

A number of research institutes and organizations in Kyrgyzstan have worked for many years on mountain-related problems. At the same time, the proclamation of the International Year of Mountains has led to heightened interest in the study of such problems. There have been positive results in scientific developments, the use of which could have a tangible impact on the economic, social, political and cultural development of Kyrgyzstan's mountain regions.

With a view to stepping up the activities of scholars and scientists and research institutes and organizations, tailoring research to meet practical needs, improving means of finding sources of financing for research, design and other projects, the following main areas for mountain-related research should be approved:

- Man in the mountains;
- Disasters in the mountains;
- Water problems in the mountains;
- Soil erosion in the mountains;
- Biodiversity in the mountains;
- Use of land and forests in the mountains;

– Agriculture in the mountains.

3. Creation of the best possible system of providing medical services to mountain regions

According to data provided by Kyrgyzstan's National Statistical Committee, nearly two thirds of the country's population live in mountain regions. The birth rate is high but, unfortunately, the mortality rate, especially among children, is also high. Information from Kyrgyzstan's Ministry of Health reveals a high incidence of infectious, cardiovascular and other serious diseases.

Kyrgyzstan's economic difficulties have adversely affected the system of public health care in mountain regions. With the transition to a market economy, the costs of medical care has risen sharply. This is taking place against a background of other serious problems: the sharp increase in the cost and the deterioration of the public transport system and of telephone service and other forms of communication, the decline in material and technical support for medical institutions, the flight of health-care specialists from mountain regions, and so on.

For these and other reasons, the inhabitants of mountain regions have simply stopped visiting health-care facilities, and the workers of such facilities have little influence on the situation. The limited opportunities and lack of resources for developing health care in mountain regions have not only adversely affected the health of the present generation but will also have a negative impact on future generations of the country's population.

In order to protect the health of the greater part of our population and forestall catastrophic consequences for the gene pool of our people, adequate preventive measures must be taken immediately.

To this end, the following tasks must be accomplished:

1. Elaborate and adopt a national programme entitled "Medical and medico-biological problems of mountains" and the best possible means of organizing medical services in Kyrgyzstan's mountain regions.

2. Prepare and approve plans for implementing the programme entitled "Medical and medico-biological problems of mountains" and for devising the best possible means of organizing medical services in Kyrgyzstan's mountain regions.

4. Introduction of new methods of education: distance learning in mountain regions

The economic, social, political and cultural development of mountain regions calls for the raising of education to a qualitatively new level that will enable children and young people living in mountain communities to enter the coming century with confidence and be sure of their future. Kyrgyzstan's economic and social difficulties have adversely affected the educational system in mountain regions, particularly elementary and secondary education. Shortages of teaching staff and materials, and difficulties in providing social protection for workers in the field of education, on the one hand, and the growing poverty of the population, which makes it impossible to meet the basic needs of school-age children for proper clothing, shoes, and school supplies, which prevents many children from attending school, on the other, here are some of the main reasons for the steady decline in literacy in mountain regions.

It is well known that the Government of Kyrgyzstan devotes a great deal of attention to these questions. It has adopted a number of decisions with a view to solving education-related problems.

At the same time, in the solution of problems related to the development of education in mountain regions today and in the future, serious consideration must be given to such factors as the remoteness of most mountain communities, their considerable distance from each other and the sparseness of the population in mountain regions.

In the world's developed mountainous countries, such factors have already led to the consideration of new teaching methods. Practice has shown that the most effective method is *distance learning*. The introduction of distance learning in secondary schools in remote mountain regions would help to solve a number of urgent problems in Kyrgyzstan. First, it would help eliminate computer illiteracy among

schoolchildren in remote mountain regions; secondly, it would provide broad access to information through the Internet and e-mail at a time when these regions are starved for information; thirdly, it would help solve many problems related to communication and the exchange of information between regions and the capital; finally, and most importantly, it would raise the intellectual and spiritual development of children and young people in Kyrgyzstan's mountain regions to a qualitatively new level.

Given the importance of the foregoing, the following tasks must be accomplished:

1. Develop and implement a project entitled "Distance learning in secondary schools in mountain regions";

2. Gradually create a unified national telecommunications network to meet the needs of distance learning, communication and information.

Priorities for the administration of mountain regions

The remoteness from the capital of Kyrgyzstan, the considerable distances between mountain communities, the relative sparseness of the population in mountain regions, on the one hand, and difficult access owing to rugged mountain terrain and harsh weather and climatic conditions during the cold months of the year, on the other, create specific difficulties for administration and the flow of information. For these reasons, in many mountainous countries, owing to poor communications with economic, political and cultural centres, the population of most mountain regions has been marginalized. Kyrgyzstan is no exception.

The basic principles for preventing the marginalization of the population of mountain regions is the *development of local self-government, the granting of maximum autonomy in the solution of economic, social and cultural problems along with the development of modern forms of communication* (telephone, telegraph, fax, Internet, e-mail) and *rapid means for the receipt, exchange and dissemination of information.*

In this connection, all-round support should be given to the activities of the Kyrgyztelecom Joint Stock Company which since 1996 has been working on the creation of a unified system of information and communication between mountain regions, administrative regions and the capital of Kyrgyzstan. Thanks to international investments, an A-standard ground satellite station has been built and put into operation, and construction is being completed on the Trans-Asian-European Fibre-Optic Line of Communication from Frankfurt am Main, Germany, to Shanghai, China, a segment of which will pass through Kyrgyzstan; and a digital telecommunications network is being created in Kyrgyzstan's regions. Today 42 ministries and administrative departments are linked to the State information network.

For the improved management of the development of Kyrgyzstan's mountain regions, the following tasks must be accomplished:

1. Involve as many as possible local administrations in the solution of mountain-related problems, counting on regions' development of their own potential;

2. Encourage the general public in mountain communities to participate in the activities of various non-governmental organizations, public associations and societies;

3. Provide all-round support for the gradual creation of a unified system of information and communication between mountain regions and the capital of Kyrgyzstan (unified telecommunications network).

4. Plan of measures to implement the National Programme for the Preparation and Conduct of the International Year of Mountains in Kyrgyzstan

The plan of measures for the preparation and conduct of the International Year of Mountains has been drawn up on the basis of the recommendations, wishes and suggestions of the Government of Kyrgyzstan, ministries, administrative departments, State, public and private organizations, scientists and scholars and anyone interested in the adequate preparation and conduct of the International Year of Mountains and in the future development of Kyrgyzstan's mountain regions.

Conclusion

The implementation of this Programme is aimed at laying solid foundations for the further sustainable development of Kyrgyzstan's mountain regions.

The end of the International Year of Mountains should be the beginning of the consistent and forward-looking development of Kyrgyzstan's mountain regions.

It is vitally important to adopt a new approach to the understanding of and attitudes towards mountain regions and to change public awareness. This requires the gradual transfer of economic, cultural and information centres to mountain regions and maximum development of self-government, self-sufficiency and sustainable development. This is one of the main priorities for the development of Kyrgyzstan in the third millennium.